



News Release

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Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Utah Targets Healthcare Providers for World No Tobacco Day

Just minutes of a doctor's counseling
make a real difference in helping smokers quit

(Salt Lake City, UT) - The Utah Department of Health (UDOH), Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Utah (CTFU), and Utah's local health departments are joining together for World No Tobacco Day to send a message to Utah health care providers about the critical role they play in helping people break their tobacco habits.

The theme for the May 31, 2005, World No Tobacco Day is Healthcare Professionals Against Tobacco: Action and Answers. The UDOH and CTFU have produced a new healthcare provider guide for treating tobacco dependence. Local health educators will be making visits to community physicians to emphasize the importance of the health care provider's role in the quitting process and to share the guide and information about free, effective counseling services for patients.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evidence from three different studies show even a three-minute physician-patient counseling session can make a big difference in overall tobacco abstinence rates. Also, the more time spent counseling, the more likely the outcome will be successful. Best practices for treating tobacco use and dependence are that both physicians and other health care providers should strongly advise every patient who smokes to quit.

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Dr. Tamara Lewis, Chairperson, the Utah Tobacco Advisory Committee and Medical Director for Community Health and Prevention at IHC, said, “The healthcare provider’s role is essential in promoting tobacco-free lifestyles and cultures. Utah’s statewide tobacco prevention and control effort offers free cessation counseling to help people quit using tobacco. When we couple these programs with the advice and guidance from health professionals, we are even more effective.”

The new healthcare provider guide features an outline of best practices in tobacco dependence counseling; descriptions of medication therapies; and information about fax referral to the Utah Tobacco Quit Line. Two new pamphlets to share with patients accompany the guide; one for orienting patients to the Quit Line and another for motivating patients who are not ready to quit.

“This resource has compiled the latest quitting information in a convenient format,” says Heather Borski, program manager, Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, UDOH. “It makes it very simple for health care providers to find the information they need to help their patients.”

Additional information and resources specific to a variety of healthcare professions can be found at www.tobaccofreeutah.org/healthcare.html. For information on World No Tobacco Day, visit www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2005. World No Tobacco Day was created by member states of the World Health Organization in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes. The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Utah is comprised of more than 30 public health, non-profit health and community organizations working to promote tobacco-free policies and lifestyles in Utah.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.